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RECIPE: Minestrone Soup

Looking for the perfect meal for a cold winter night? Try this cholesterol-free classic Italian vegetable soup full of heart-healthy, fiber-rich beans, peas, and carrots from the feds’ Stay Young at Heart program.

Ingredients

1/4 C	olive oil
1 clove	garlic, minced or 1/8 tsp garlic powder
1-1/3 C	coarsely chopped onion
1-1/2 C	coarsely chopped celery and leaves
1 can (6 oz)	tomato paste
1 Tbsp	chopped fresh parsley
1 C	sliced carrots, fresh or frozen
4-3/4 C	shredded cabbage
1 can (1 lb)	tomatoes, cut up
1 C	canned red kidney beans, drained/rinsed
1-1/2 C	frozen peas
1-1/2 C	fresh green beans
dash	hot sauce
11 C	water
2 C	uncooked, broken spaghetti

Preparation

- Heat oil in a 4-quart saucepan.
- Add garlic, onion, and celery and sauté about 5 minutes.
- Add all remaining ingredients except spaghetti, and stir until ingredients are well mixed.
- Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer about 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
- Add uncooked spaghetti and simmer 2-3 minutes only.

Yield: 16 one-cup servings

Nutrition Information:

Calories: 153
Total fat: 4 g
Saturated fat: less than 1 g
Cholesterol: 0 mg
Sodium: 191 mg



SMART LIVING

Heart Failure

Winter 2011



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Warning: Smoking Causes Immediate Damage

Think you’re safe if you just smoke a little bit? Bad news. Exposure to tobacco smoke — even occasional smoking or inhaling someone else’s secondhand smoke — causes *immediate damage* that can lead to disease and death, the U.S. Surgeon General warns in a new report.

Cigarette smoke contains a deadly brew of 7,000 chemicals and compounds. Hundreds of them are poisonous and at least 70 cause cancer. *Each time* you take a puff or inhale secondhand smoke, these chemicals spread throughout your body, damaging blood vessels and cells in nearly every organ, according to the report.

“There is no risk-free level of exposure to tobacco smoke,” Regina Benjamin said in releasing her first report as Surgeon General. She cautioned that even a single puff or brief exposure to secondhand smoke causes heart disease and can trigger a heart attack, stroke or other cardiovascular event.

“The chemicals in tobacco smoke reach your lungs quickly every time you inhale causing damage immediately,” Benjamin said. She stressed that “inhaling even the smallest amount of tobacco smoke” can cause cellular damage that can lead to cancer.

Harmful effects. According to the report, tobacco smoke is responsible for 85 percent of lung cancers

and can cause cancer in any part of the body. It also causes or worsens more than a dozen chronic health conditions, including heart disease, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and migraine.

The report warns that tobacco smoke also:

- Makes it harder for diabetics to control their blood sugar
- Makes it harder to get pregnant
- Damages fetal lung and brain tissue
- Causes miscarriages and pre-term deliveries
- Ups the risk of sudden infant death syndrome

Worried? You should be. The good news is if you smoke, quitting will help. So will avoiding others’ smoke.

“This report makes it clear – quitting at any time gives your body a chance to heal the damage caused by smoking,” Benjamin said “It’s never too late to quit, but the sooner you do it, the better.”

So don’t smoke. And if you do — stop!

Need help kicking the habit? Talk to your doctor or check out smoking cessation programs online and in your community. You can also call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for help.

Are You *Really* Having a Stroke?

A stroke can happen any time and any place. Would you recognize if you or someone else were having one? Following are the warning signs. Learn them. And call 911 *right away* if you or someone else experience *any* of them.

Stroke warning signs:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arms or legs, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

The symptoms may last or come and go.

Reduce your risk. An estimated 795,000 Americans suffer a new or recurring stroke every year. You can lower your risk of a first stroke by 80 percent by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, according to new guidelines issued by the American Heart and American Stroke associations. That means eating a

diet rich in fruits and veggies, exercising, keeping blood pressure in check and *not* smoking.

Stroke occurs when normal blood flow to the brain is interrupted. Brain cells die if blood can't bring them nutrients and oxygen.

There are two kinds of stroke. Most strokes are caused by blood clots. These are called ischemic strokes. The other type, called hemorrhagic stroke, is caused by a broken or leaking blood vessel in the brain. A common symptom of the latter is a very sudden, extremely painful headache.

Signs of ischemic stroke include sudden weakness on one side of the body and trouble talking, walking, seeing or thinking. Brain damage in ischemic strokes can be limited if patients are treated with a clot-busting drug called tissue plasminogen activator (tPA). But the drug must be administered *within three hours* of onset of stroke signs. So try to keep track of when symptoms start.



Work It Out: Exercise = Fewer Ills

Maybe this will get you moving. People who exercise on a regular basis not only reduce their odds of chunking up, but they also cut their risk of developing about *two dozen* physical and mental health conditions. They may also slow wear and tear on their bodies as they age, according to a new study.

The study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Practice*, cites extensive research showing that regular workouts can help reduce the risk of a slew of ills, including type 2 diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, depression, hypertension, obesity, migraine and bone-thinning osteoporosis.

In fact, researchers say that boosting physical activity is probably the best lifestyle choice you can make to improve your health aside from not smoking.

Recommendations. The study advises adults between the ages of 18 and 65 to shoot for 150

minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a week. That's about a half hour of brisk walking five days a week.

People like joggers, who exercise more vigorously, should exercise at least 20 minutes, three times a week, according to the study. Healthy adults should also do two strength-training sessions (that work with the body's major muscle groups) a week.

The researchers said people should exercise throughout their lives, no matter their age.

So turn off your computer and TV – and start walking, swimming, cycling ...



Heart Health: Brush Your Teeth

Do you brush your teeth at least twice a day? If not, it's time to start. Regular brushing not only protects your gums and teeth. It may also help stave off heart disease, according to a study published in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ).

Researchers from University College London followed 12,000 people for about eight years. They found that individuals who rarely or never brushed their teeth twice daily had a 70 percent higher risk of having a heart attack, stroke or other cardiovascular event than people who routinely cleaned their choppers two times a day.

(FYI: Just 71 percent of those surveyed said they brushed their teeth twice a day and only 62 percent said they visited the dentist every six months, according to the study.)

Scientists have long suspected a link between gum disease and heart problems. Researchers said these findings suggest that gum disease or inflammation

of the gum may contribute to the buildup of plaque (fat, cholesterol, calcium and other substances) on the inside walls of the arteries. Plaque buildup narrows arteries, slowing and even blocking blood flow. Clogged arteries dramatically increase the likelihood of heart attack, stroke, and even death.

"We were surprised to find a relationship between tooth-brushing *frequency* and both cardiovascular disease and inflammatory markers in the blood," said study co-author Richard Watt. He said the findings confirm and strengthen the suggested association between oral hygiene and the risk of heart disease.

So start brushing!



Chocolate: Sweet Heart Treat

This one's for you, chocolate lovers! A new study suggests that eating dark chocolate once a week not only satisfies your sweet tooth but may also add years to your life.

Australian researchers asked 1,216 older women how many servings of chocolate they eat every week. Their findings, published in the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*: the ones who ate chocolate "frequently" (at least one to six servings a week) had a 24 percent lower risk of heart disease than those who ate it "rarely" (less than a serving a week) over the course of 10 years.

This finding builds on earlier research linking dark chocolate to a reduced risk of stroke and lower stress levels. Dark chocolate is rich in antioxidants called flavonoids (milk chocolate contains far fewer). Flavonoids are naturally occurring



compounds known to have positive vascular effects, such as lower blood pressure and improved blood flow to the brain and heart.

But this doesn't mean you should eat chocolate to your heart's content! Chocolate is high in calories and saturated fat, so large amounts might harm your heart and pack on the pounds. Limit your intake to small to moderate portions a couple of times a week. And avoid chocolates with sugary fillings like caramel, marshmallow and toffee that add to the calorie and saturated-fat count.

You should also keep consumption to a minimum if you're pregnant (because of the caffeine) or if you suffer from migraines or frequent heartburn. And remember: *chocolate may be sweet but it can't do it all*. You need to eat other heart-healthy foods like veggies and fruit and exercise regularly to stay in shape.